

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region II
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Sunday, September 27, 2009

From: Geoffrey Garrison, OSC

Subject:

and FINAL

Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport Mercury Spill

Ave. Balorioty de Castro, Isla Verde, PR

Latitude: 18.4370900

Longitude: -66.0040998

POLREP No.: 1

Reporting Period: 8/25/2009 - 8/27/2009

Start Date: 8/25/2009

Mob Date: 8/25/2009

Demob Date: 8/25/2009

Completion Date: 8/25/2009

CERCLIS ID #:

RCRIS ID #:

Site #:

D.O. #:

Response Authority: CERCLA

Response Type: Emergency

NPL Status: Non NPL

Incident Category: Removal Action

Contract #

Site Description

At approximately 0845 hrs, 25 August 2009, a passenger traveling on American Eagle from San Juan PR to the Dominican Republic tried to enter the airport terminal with a leaking Mercury container in his carry-on bag. The amount of Mercury in the container was unknown but estimated at 20 pounds. The TSA agent detected the leaking Mercury container and alerted the Airport security. The Mercury release shut down airport operations for approximately one hour, and prevented the reopening of the two gates closest to the spill until 1900 hrs.

The Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport (IATA: SJU, ICAO: TJSJ, FAA LID: SJU) is a public airport located in Carolina, Puerto Rico, three miles (five kilometers) southeast of San Juan. The airport receives over 10 million passengers per year making it the busiest airport in the Caribbean in terms of movement of passengers, and it is owned and managed by the Puerto Rico Ports Authority.

Current Activities

EPA was notified of the Luis Muñoz Marín Airport Mercury spill at 1030 hrs, August 25, 2009, The EPA OSC contacted the PR Environmental Quality Board (EQB) and they requested assistance with the emergency response. EPA issued a Technical Direction Document to the EPA Removal Support Team 2 (RST 2) to respond alongside the OSC. EPA also responded with a member of the Emergency Response Team who was on the Island for another response.

A unified command was set up in response to the release of Mercury from luggage being screened in the American Airlines (AA) departure terminal section of the airport. The unified command included the FBI, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Puerto Rico Ports Authority (PRPA) and EQB. EPA was present in a support role to EQB. The National Guard CST was present along with other response agencies.

The initial response included shutting down all airport operations and evacuating the passenger terminals. Partial operations to at least half of the airport were restored after one hour.

The National Guard Civil Support Team (CST) and EQB personnel conducted a Level B entry with the purpose of establishing a safe radius from the Mercury spill in the luggage screening area. The CST utilized an ICAM in order to examine the luggage, a Muti-RAE for air screening to determine safe levels, and a VDR2 to identify radiation levels. The PREQB utilized a Jerome and the EPA Lumex 915+ Mercury Vapor Analyzer to conduct air monitoring for Mercury. Using the Lumex, EQB measured readings exceeding 50,000 nanograms per cubic meter inside the luggage verifying the Mercury was present. The entry team measured concentrations between 32 and 111 nanograms per cubic meter outside the 300 foot zone. In consultation with ERT, the HVAC was turned on.

As per a request by the FBI, the CST entered the Hot Zone to collect samples at 1515 hours. AA contracted Indutech Environmental Services to conduct removal and cleanup activities. The PRPA had activated Clean Harbors for the response but they were released and Indutech conducted the removal of the Mercury contaminated items and decon of the surfaces. Indutech, reported that the Mercury had "percolated" through the suitcase fabric onto the stainless steel screening table. The two suitcases that were in contact with the Mercury were placed in double poly bags and over packed in an 85-gallon plastic drum.

The FBI took custody of the suitcases. Indutech personnel decontaminated and removed the metal table in the terminal area. PREQB personnel re-entered the Hot Zone at 18:20 to confirm that the area was properly decontaminated; they measured airborne concentrations of 365 nanograms per cubic meter which is below the ATSDR recommended 3 micrograms (3,000 nanograms). EQB, in consultation with ERT and ATSDR, determined the levels were acceptable and recommended the re-opening of the AA terminal.

The small portion of the airport that was still closed for this release was reopened at approx 1900 hrs. At 1910 hours, 25 August 2009, the EPA OSC, ERT and RST2 concluded activities in support of the emergency response and departed the Airport.

Planned Removal Actions

None.

Next Steps

Attend the After Action Reviews to the Emergency Response. Assist the EPA Office of Regional Counsel (ORC) and the AUSA in preparation of charges against the PRP.

Key Issues

None

Estimated Costs *

	Budgeted	Total To Date	Remaining	% Remaining
Extramural Costs				
TAT/START	\$5,500.00	\$2,200.00	\$3,300.00	60.00%
Intramural Costs				
Total Site Costs	\$5,500.00	\$2,200.00	\$3,300.00	60.00%

* The above accounting of expenditures is an estimate based on figures known to the OSC at the time this report was written. The OSC does not necessarily receive specific figures on final payments made to any contractor(s). Other financial data which the OSC must rely upon may not be entirely up-to-date. The cost accounting provided in this report does not necessarily represent an exact monetary figure which the government may include in any claim for cost recovery.

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